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Chairman: Mr. Argüello ..... (Argentina)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 28: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*) (A/63/20)

1. **Mr. Arévalo Yepes** (Colombia), speaking as Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and introducing the Committee's report (A/63/20), said that the coordinated use of space technologies and their applications could be crucial in disaster management and in areas such as climate change, food security and health. COPUOS had regularly sought to increase awareness and build capacities in the use of space technology applications at the international, regional and national levels. Earth observation systems, meteorological satellites, satellite communications and satellite navigation and positioning systems were effective tools in environmental assessment, natural resource management, early warning systems, and the provision of educational and health services in remote areas. Using multifaceted space tools, States could make development decisions about various cross-cutting issues and implement action mandated at the global level.

2. For almost half a century, his Committee had sought to bring the benefits of space technology to all humanity. After the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III), the Committee had aligned many of its activities with the Millennium Development Goals. The results had been impressive, as in the case of the establishment of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) and the International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (ICG).

3. COPUOS had expanded its agenda for 2009 to include two new items: on space and climate change, and on use of space technology in the United Nations system. Other items in such areas as space and water or international cooperation in the use of space-derived geospatial data for sustainable development or space and society were under consideration; and COPUOS was making more of a contribution to the thematic clusters dealt with by the Commission on Sustainable Development.

4. The Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities had restructured its reporting mechanism and strengthened its connection with COPUOS so as to enhance coordination and cooperation among the relevant United Nations bodies. That, together with the Committee's own new related agenda item, would pave the way for mutually beneficial cooperation between the two bodies, and make for stronger Member State participation in the work of the Meeting. The series of open sessions held annually by the Meeting promoted dialogue between Member States and the United Nations bodies using space technology applications.

5. Among the considerable achievements during the previous year by COPUOS and its subsidiary bodies, there had been the adoption of General Assembly resolutions 62/217, endorsing the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines of the Committee and 62/101, relating to the practice in registering space objects. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had begun considering items on space debris and recent developments in global navigation satellite systems, and the Legal Subcommittee had begun considering items on capacity-building in space law and on general exchange of information on relevant national legislation, all of which were of crucial importance.

6. The Working Group of the Whole of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee was considering the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III; its Working Group on the use of nuclear power sources in outer space was, in partnership with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) preparing a safety framework for nuclear power source applications in outer space; and its Working Group on near-Earth objects was considering mechanisms for the international handling of threats of collision of asteroids with Earth.

7. The Working Group of the Legal Subcommittee on the status and applications of the five United Nations treaties on outer space had progressed in its work, as had its Working Group on the definition and delimitation of outer space.

8. The Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (Outer Space Treaty) of 1967, the landmark legal instrument, still formed — together with the other four core treaties on outer space and the five sets of declarations and principles on outer space activities which COPUOS had been instrumental in formulating — the legal order for current space activities.

9. The Office for Outer Space Affairs had, together with expert educators in space law and the regional centres for space technology education affiliated to the United Nations, begun to develop a curriculum for space law education at the regional centres, which could eventually be used also in universities around the world.

10. In addition, various successful symposia on relevant issues had been organized by COPUOS and its Subcommittees.

11. **Mr. Tarragô** (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), the candidate State the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the associated States Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, observed that international cooperation was essential to ensuring the peaceful use of outer space. MERCOSUR and its associate member States were committed to working within the Space Conference of the Americas to improve regional and interregional cooperation.

12. Space technology had become a vital instrument for the application of the recommendations of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and a tool for responding adequately to many challenges, including climate change, the food and energy crises and natural disasters. Capacity-building through international cooperation must be a priority. South-South cooperation, could strengthen national and regional capacities and investment and education in outer space science and technology, while ensuring free access to space applications and data.

13. The peaceful use of outer space required a sustained international dialogue and a strengthened international legal regime. Initiatives like the draft treaty recently submitted by China and the Russian Federation to the Conference on Disarmament were therefore welcome. The recommendations of UNISPACE III must continue to be applied. Also encouraging was the improved dialogue between COPUOS and the Commission on Sustainable Development and there should be a general exchange of scientific studies and information on the areas currently under consideration by the Commission. The COPUOS panel on space technology and food security should continue to offer useful opportunities for exchanging experience. Space technology was already being applied in the South American region to agriculture in semi-arid areas.

14. The United Nations Programme on Space Applications should focus on those areas where most of the developing countries could participate and derive benefit. Argentine, Chilean and Brazilian space research institutions would continue to offer training in space technology applications as part of the workshops, training courses, symposiums and expert meetings planned for 2009.

15. UN-SPIDER had proved its worth in disaster prevention and early warning, but it could greatly increase its effectiveness through regular coordination with existing programmes that promoted the use of space-based information.

16. At its Brazil campus, the Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (CRECTEALC) was training professionals from the entire region in flood management and response through the use of new monitoring techniques and the identification of best practices. In cooperation with an Ecuadorian space agency, geoinformation and satellite imaging were being applied to the analysis of catchment areas; and there were plans to offer an advanced degree in remote sensing and geoinformation systems. All countries of the region were invited to work with CRECTEALC.

17. Lastly, the countries and people of the region had enthusiastically welcomed the proclamation of the International Year of Astronomy in 2009, and MERCOSUR hoped that the occasion would be used to promote social inclusion through scientific knowledge.

18. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic) said he was pleased that, in its report, COPUOS had stressed that local and regional needs and capabilities must be taken into consideration when implementing the recommendations of UNISPACE III. He also welcomed the link that had been established between the Committee's work relating to the implementation of those same recommendations and the work being carried out by the Commission on Sustainable Development. His delegation also saluted the initiative of Chile to hold a workshop on space applications and food security.

19. Greater transparency would strengthen the peaceful and responsible nature of scientific activities in outer space. It was therefore important to increase the involvement of developing countries in the peaceful uses of outer space. On the other hand, the introduction of weapons into outer space could

undermine efforts for its peaceful uses. In that connection, his country had supported a draft treaty on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space and of the threat or use of force against outer space objects, which had been submitted by China and the Russian Federation to the Conference on Disarmament.

20. **Mr. Al Habib** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that outer space should be kept open to all States for peaceful purposes. His country attached great importance to international cooperation in obtaining optimal benefit from space applications, and supported a closer link between COPUOS and the Commission on Sustainable Development in the thematic areas addressed by the Commission.

21. As a limited natural resource, the geostationary orbit should be fairly and equitably accessible to all countries irrespective of their technical capabilities. Moreover, the international community could more fully benefit from space technology provided that such technology was not diverted to military use. The weaponization of outer space constituted a major threat to all mankind, and its prevention must be fully supported if the peaceful use of outer space was to be promoted.

22. His country conducted its space-related activities on the principles stipulated in the relevant General Assembly resolutions and related international instruments. It had signed and ratified the four major international instruments governing the rescue of astronauts, damage caused by space objects, the use of outer space, and objects launched into outer space, and had recently hosted its first international workshop on space law.

23. The practical application of space sciences and technologies such as remote sensing and earth observation was becoming increasingly crucial for sustainable development, especially in the areas of natural resource management and flood and drought prediction and mitigation. Space-based early warning systems held the potential for preventing or mitigating loss and damage from natural disasters.

24. **Ms. Chen** Peijie (China) called on the international community to work together for a harmonious outer space. A harmonious outer space should first and foremost be peaceful; accordingly States must prevent the militarization of outer space.

25. As the common heritage of humanity as a whole, a harmonious outer space should be a cooperative one; space activities should promote international cooperation. China had been committed to enhancing international cooperation in outer space on the basis of peaceful use, equal and mutual benefit, and common development. It continued to take part in activities organized by the United Nations and to provide robust support for the UN-SPIDER project, for which an office was being prepared in Beijing. China was also committed to promoting space cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, and maintained bilateral cooperation with a number of countries in the field.

26. A harmonious outer space should also foster development. China shared the view that space activities should facilitate international efforts to promote common development and shared prosperity, and had already made progress in that regard. Images provided by the China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite launched in 2007 were being used, inter alia, in agricultural production, environmental protection and land and resources surveying. In 2008, China had launched a meteorological satellite for more accurate weather forecasting, along with two micro-satellites for environment and disaster monitoring and resource mapping. Space technology had played a particularly noteworthy role in support of relief efforts following the devastating earthquake in Sichuan. Her delegation thanked all who had provided China with images and other space-related technical assistance.

27. Finally, a harmonious space should be subject to the rule of law. Space activities should abide by existing international treaties on space and States should further improve the legal regime governing outer space, with a view to preventing the weaponization of and arms races in outer space. An international legal instrument to that effect should be negotiated. China and several other States had submitted working papers to the Conference on Disarmament, most recently a draft treaty on preventing the deployment of weapons in outer space, and hoped that substantive discussions of the draft could begin as soon as possible.

28. **Mr. Punkrasin** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the great benefits derived from space technology and applications had been accompanied by enormous challenges. Not all countries enjoyed equal access to space and there was a need to ensure that the

benefits of space science and technology were shared widely among spacefaring and non-spacefaring nations alike.

29. It was also necessary to reaffirm the core principle that space technology and applications should be used for peaceful purposes only. ASEAN commended the substantial progress made by COPUOS in that regard.

30. Reaffirming the Association's strong interest in and support for the UN-SPIDER programme, he encouraged COPUOS to continue reviewing and developing a detailed long-term work and budget plan, as well as to strengthen coordination among UN-SPIDER offices in Vienna, Beijing, Bonn and Geneva. The programme could also be equipped with a mechanism to encourage the participation of and contributions from Member States.

31. ASEAN supported the COPUOS Working Group on the Definition and Delimitation of Outer Space and its efforts to ensure the peaceful use of outer space by non-State actors as well as by States. The operationalization of space technologies through international cooperation was one of the most effective tools for sustainable development, but the associated capacity-building programmes should be customized to respond to the specific needs of the developing world. The Association also expressed its appreciation for the support of its dialogue partners, including Australia, China, the European Union, India and Japan, for the work of its own Subcommittee on Space Technology and Applications in various projects and forums.

32. Speaking as the representative of Thailand, he said that his country would shortly be co-hosting the next United Nations workshop on space law, and invited all Member States to participate. Thailand had just launched THEOS, its first remote-sensing satellite, and stood ready to provide disaster monitoring and mitigation data under United Nations and regional cooperation schemes.

33. **Ms. Lebovits** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey, the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Montenegro and Serbia and, in addition, Armenia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the use of outer space had become crucial for delivery of communications services to the most isolated regions of the world. Outer space could also be used for deployment of tools for forecasting and preventing natural disasters. In that connection, the European Union had supported the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) since its inception.

34. The European Union intended to increase its use of space technologies in order to more accurately measure the phenomena linked to climate change and to mitigate their effects. Integrated space technologies, such as telecommunications, the Global Positioning System (GPS) and Earth observation systems, were important to international development and their use should be emphasized.

35. Aware of the importance of building transparency and confidence in outer space activities, the European Union States had voted unanimously in favour of General Assembly resolutions 62/43 (on transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space activities) and 62/20 (on prevention of an arms race in outer space).

36. The European Union was seeking to develop a non-binding code of conduct for outer space activities which would establish basic rules for States engaged in outer space activities, help to reduce the risk of space collisions and of creation of space debris and strengthen understanding among spacefaring nations.

37. Complementarity between the work of the Conference on Disarmament and COPUOS and communication between those bodies would be essential in order to prevent duplication of effort. In that regard, she said that the term of the Legal Subcommittee could be shortened and suggested that the question should be taken up by COPUOS as part of its future activities.

38. **Ms. Aitimova** (Kazakhstan) said that international cooperation in the use of outer space and the application of space technologies to promote sustainable development was necessary in order to ensure worldwide social and economic progress. Kazakhstan's space infrastructure, including the renowned space launching pad in Baikonur, enabled it to contribute actively to international space activities and to support United Nations efforts in that regard.

39. Kazakhstan participated in various international projects that included the use of space science and technology for the protection of the environment. It

also cooperated with the Russian Federation on space and aviation technology and remote Earth sensing. With the upcoming launch of the KazSat-2 geostationary communications satellite, her country would become one of only 25 nations with two or more satellites in orbit.

40. As one of the world's 10 major producers and exporters of grain, Kazakhstan was prepared to use the latest agricultural technologies, including space applications and tools, in order to deal with the global food crisis. There was an urgent need to increase financing for and the transfer of innovative technologies in order to maximize global agricultural production.

41. Kazakhstan was fully aware of the ramifications of environmental disasters, for the former Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground was located on its territory. Although the framework for international assistance and cooperation regarding the application of space technology in those regions had already been mandated in several General Assembly resolutions, those resolutions had yet to be fully implemented.

42. **Mr. Anwar** (India) said that the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) had provided remote sensing imagery and support services for post-disaster relief operations in Myanmar, after cyclone Nargis, and in China, after the recent earthquake in Sichuan Province. In addition, the Indian Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle had launched a commercial satellite for an international client. During the coming years, his country intended to give students and scientists from developing countries the opportunity to use Indian launchers.

43. His country had also pursued programmes aimed at deploying space technology in support of tele-education, tele-medicine and delivery of local planning and development information.

44. The upcoming launch of Chandrayaan-1, India's first unmanned scientific mission to the moon, was an example of how scientists from different countries could share their expertise for the benefit of mankind. The space vehicle was expected to carry scientific instruments not only for India but also for the United States, the European Space Agency (ESA) and Bulgaria. ISRO and its Russian counterpart had also signed a joint lunar research and exploration agreement for the development of Chandrayaan-2, which would consist of a lunar orbiter and a vehicle for use on the surface of the moon.

45. ISRO also took a special interest in helping developing countries to build their capacities in the application of space technology. In that connection, the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific (CSSTEAP), which operated from India, had thus conducted 26 post-graduate programmes and 19 short-term courses and workshops that had benefited scholars from within and outside the region.

46. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) welcomed the commitment of COPUOS and its Subcommittees to implementing the recommendations of UNISPACE III, including the latter's Plan of Action. Colombia attached high priority to promoting international and regional cooperation for the transfer of knowledge and technologies; in 2007, it had provided training in geospatial technologies to more than 800 students, including 130 from other Latin American countries. The new Colombian Space Commission served to integrate efforts and put space technologies at the service of Colombian society and sustainable development, in line with the Declaration of San Francisco de Quito of 2006. Colombia had also recently signed a treaty with Argentina aimed at developing bilateral cooperation on research and the peaceful uses of outer space. The deployment of arms in space must be avoided as a matter of priority, and to that end communication between COPUOS and the Conference on Disarmament was essential.

47. As the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had noted, the geostationary orbit was a limited natural resource. Its use should be based on the principle of rational and equitable access of all countries. The needs of developing countries should be taken into account, as should the geographical location of certain countries and the role of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The geostationary orbit should not be restricted to commercial uses at the expense of social functions; the coordination established between the Office for Outer Space Affairs and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) was therefore welcome. The administrative capacity of the Office for Outer Space Affairs should be strengthened, since it was fundamental to the implementation of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, which included priority thematic areas important to developing countries and countries in transition. Over the past 50 years, COPUOS had

helped promote better understanding of the interaction between the Earth systems and human development. Further cooperation was essential to achieve sustainable development.

48. **Mr. Hodgkins** (United States of America) commended the work done in the past year by COPUOS and its Subcommittees, with the support of the Office for Outer Space Affairs. In its 50 years of service, COPUOS had acted as a catalyst, promoting international cooperation in space activities and fostering a broad exchange of information among spacefaring and non-spacefaring nations on the latest advances in space exploration and the resulting benefits.

49. The Declaration of Legal Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, adopted by the General Assembly in 1963, had produced a legal framework for the orderly use and exploration of outer space that had stood the test of time. Likewise the Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space, which had established a framework for a prompt and effective international response to space accidents or emergencies had lost none of its relevance.

50. At its most recent session, the Legal Subcommittee had begun work on two new items. The general exchange of information on national legislation relevant to the peaceful exploration and use of outer space would provide insights into how States oversaw their governmental and non-governmental activities in space. Equally encouraging had been the Subcommittee's consideration of its new item on capacity-building in space law. The proposed addition to its agenda of an item on the general exchange of information on national mechanisms relating to space debris mitigation measures was also welcome. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had also had another successful session, reaching consensus on a draft safety framework for the use of nuclear power sources in outer space which had been developed with expert input from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). His delegation welcomed the successful completion of the multi-year workplan on the International Heliophysical Year, a truly international endeavour. The Year had focused worldwide attention on the importance of international cooperation on solar-terrestrial physics research, which was so important to daily lives, the environment and space systems. The addition of a new item on global navigation satellite systems on the Subcommittee's agenda was also welcome. The International Committee on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (ICG) was successfully encouraging compatibility and interoperability among global and regional global navigation satellite systems, promoting their use and integration into infrastructures, particularly in developing countries.

51. The presentation made at the fifty-first session of COPUOS by the representative of the United States National Aeronautics and Space Agency (NASA) had highlighted NASA's achievements over its first five decades, as well as its future plans for space exploration and research. COPUOS had made progress on a number of topics, including the spin-off benefits of space exploration, the need to strengthen the Committee's role in promoting international cooperation in order to preserve outer space for peaceful purposes and the use of space-derived geospatial data for sustainable development. Delegations had been able to share information on efforts to demonstrate to the general public how space activities could enrich their daily lives.

52. **Mr. Lopez-Trigo** (Cuba) said that it was paradoxical that some countries devoted millions of dollars to an arms race in outer space, while others sought to ensure that the common property of mankind was used for nobler ends such as sustainable development and the prevention of natural disasters. The Conference on Disarmament should take the lead in urgently negotiating a multilateral agreement on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Such an arms race would not only destroy the promising future of space applications; it would also jeopardize their very existence. COPUOS should play a special role in spreading and promoting the peaceful uses of outer space, as well as in improving ethical principles and legal instruments to ensure the peaceful and non-discriminatory use of all space applications.

53. Despite limited resources, Cuba was further developing research into peaceful space applications, including in the field of meteorology. Forecasts based on high resolution satellite images, had helped significantly reduce loss of life during recent hurricanes. Satellite images had also been used to detect forest fires, and to elaborate thematic agricultural maps.

54. Regional and international cooperation must be advanced through exchanges of experience and technology in fields of particular interest to developing countries, such as climate change and food security. Non-discriminatory access was essential for optimum use of the unlimited possibilities that space research and its applications offered.

55. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica) said that the panel discussion held the previous day had highlighted the potential of space applications to help solve problems at the international level, particularly in the area of global food security. The international community should use all means at its disposal to ensure that the food crisis did not balloon into a global epidemic. Jamaica supported efforts to promote the widespread use of space applications in the fields of agriculture and sustainable development, particularly in developing countries.

56. Caribbean countries continued to reap the negative consequences of the growing frequency and intensity of hurricanes. Haiti, Cuba and Jamaica had recently suffered considerable loss of life and damage to infrastructure, and the season was not yet over. In that connection, his delegation welcomed efforts undertaken by COPUOS to further enhance the capabilities of the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER), including through regional workshops. Countries of the region looked forward to using space technologies to strengthen their efforts to combat the disastrous effects of climate change. The collaborative activities planned by the Office for Outer Space Affairs in the area of disaster management, which were in keeping with the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, were particularly welcome. Space applications, with their potential to contribute to a number of fields, were critical to the future of all developing countries.

57. Finally, his delegation urged all States to desist from any action that could result in the militarization of outer space and endorsed all efforts being undertaken by COPUOS to ensure greater transparency in outer space activities. Space was the common heritage of all mankind and all States, regardless of their size or level of development, should benefit from its potential to positively enhance lives.

58. **Ms. Gash** (Australia) said that her delegation acknowledged the importance of space-related activities and it supported international efforts to address food security. Remote sensing played an increasingly important role in characterizing productivity constraints, identifying interventions that could raise resource efficiency and providing early warning of impending food deficits.

59. Space technologies currently supported a wide range of Australian research activities and other applications relevant to the issue of food security. They included satellite-based observation of atmospheric, land-surface and ocean conditions as input for weather and drought-forecasting tools, use of sensor systems to monitor crop growth, as well as long-term changes in land degradation and vegetative cover resulting from human and/or climate-related impacts. Australia sought to increase the productivity and sustainability of its farming systems as an important contribution to global food supply, including through direct application of remote sensing applications. Research institutions were engaged in a range of international partnerships to that end, with potential for further expansion to assist international development outcomes. Australia also planned to further improve its investment in agricultural research with a view to increasing agricultural productivity. Precision satellite images made it possible to predict changes in crop yields, measure sea surface temperatures and track bush fires, while global positioning systems were enabling further development of precision agriculture which could reduce costs, increase production and improve agricultural sustainability. Space technologies must also be made accessible to developing and least developed countries in order to help them reach their development potential.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.